



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

NEWS

Region 2 • 3201 Spurgin Road • Missoula, MT 59804

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 2015

FWP Seeks Comment on Proposed Bitterroot River Biennial Closure Rule for Supply Ditch Diversion

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is seeking comment on a proposed biennial rule that outlines the circumstances under which FWP could temporarily close a portion of the Bitterroot River surrounding Supply Ditch Diversion Dam for public safety and repairs to the structure.

Supply Ditch Diversion creates dangerous currents that have caused a number of boating accidents over the past several years, including a fatality in 2013. During high flows, fast currents make it very difficult for floaters to stop and carry boats around the dam.

The proposed biennial rule, out for public comment through December 18, would allow FWP to close all or a portion of a nearly five mile stretch of the Bitterroot River between Woodside and Tucker FAS when danger at the Supply Ditch Diversion is heightened and alternative ways to avoid the dam (such as walking boats around or taking the river's West channel) are difficult or impossible to navigate. This rule will also allow for closure when repairs are being made to the structure. The repairs are expected to begin in fall of 2016.

The department would be required to reopen the Bitterroot River as soon as the flows fall below 4000 cubic feet per second at the USGS Missoula Gauge or July 10, whichever occurs earliest and once repairs are complete.

There will be a public meeting with an opportunity to submit written comment at the USFS office in Hamilton on December 1st from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. The rule proposal and opportunity to submit comments is available online at fwp.mt.gov by following links under "Submit Public Comments" or can be directed to Sharon Rose Region 2 FWP, 3201 Spurgin

Rd., Missoula 59804; phone 406-542-5540; email shrose@mt.gov. Comments must be received by 5 p.m. on December 18, 2015.